

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for displaying a television commercial on end user equipment, comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of commercials available to be played on said end user

5 equipment while said equipment is tuned to a television channel;

detecting the onset of a commercial time slot on said television channel;

selecting, at said end user equipment, one of said plurality of commercials; and

playing said selected one of said plurality of commercials on a display during said

detected commercial slot as a substitute for a commercial broadcast on said television channel,

10 while said end user equipment remains tuned to said television channel.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said selecting step is performed by an end user selecting among said plurality of commercials.

15 3. The method of claim 2, further including simultaneously displaying at least two of said commercials, each on a respective portion of said display, wherein said selecting step is performed by the end user selecting one of the displayed commercials.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising customizing said plurality of commercials
20 for a particular end user.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said one commercial is selected based upon a user profile.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said one commercial is selected based at least upon a prior viewing history of an end user.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said one commercial is selected based at least upon a prior commercial selection history of an end user.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of commercials are pre-stored on a storage medium at an end user location.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said storage medium is located in a set-top box.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said storage medium is a hard disc drive.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein said storage medium is selected from the group consisting of a hard disc drive, a DVD, a CD, flash memory, EEPROM and a floppy disc.

12. The method of claim 8, further comprising periodically replacing said plurality of commercials stored on the storage medium.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein said plurality of commercials are stored at a remote location, and are transmitted to the end user equipment to be played thereat.

5 14. The method of claim 1, wherein said selecting step is performed by an end user selecting among said plurality of commercials to be excluded from further viewing, such that a substitute commercial is played as said selected commercial immediately following the exclusion selection, and further comprising storing information identifying the commercial selected to be excluded.

10 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising storing information pertaining to the number of times a particular commercial has been played at a particular user's equipment, and charging an advertiser in accordance with the number of plays.

15 16. Apparatus for displaying a television commercial on end user equipment having a television receiver, comprising:

a storage device for storing a plurality of commercials received by said user equipment;

a detecting device for detecting the onset of a commercial slot on a broadcast of a
20 television channel to which the television receiver is tuned; and,

a selector for selecting one of said plurality of commercials stored on said storage device to be displayed on said user equipment during said detected commercial time slot as a substitute for a commercial broadcast on said television channel, while said television receiver remains tuned to said television channel.

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17. The apparatus of claim 16, further comprising means for receiving a user input for selecting said one commercial.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, further including means for simultaneously displaying at least two of said commercials, each on a respective portion of a display of said user equipment, and for receiving said user input as a selection of one of said simultaneously displayed commercials.

19. The apparatus of claim 16, further comprising means for automatically selecting said one commercial based upon at least one of a user profile and default information.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, further comprising means for updating a user profile based on commercial selections made by the end user.